

# **SAFETY INFORMATION FOR WORKING TEENS**

## **Could I Get Hurt or Sick on the Job?**

Every year about 70 teens die from work injuries in the United States. Another 70,000 get hurt badly enough that they go to a hospital emergency room.

### **Here are the stories of three teens:**

- One 18 yr. old Sylvia caught her hand in an electric cabbage shredder at a fast food restaurant. Her hand is permanently disfigured and she'll never have full use of it again.
- One 17 yr. Old Joe lost his life while working as a construction helper. An electric shock killed him when he climbed a metal ladder to hand an electric drill to another worker.
- One 16 yr. Old Donna was assaulted and robbed at gunpoint at a sandwich shop. She was working alone after 11 p.m.

Why do injuries like these occur? Teens are often injured on the job due to unsafe equipment, stressful conditions, and speed-up. Also teens may not receive adequate safety training and supervision. As a teen, you are much more likely to be injured when working on jobs that you are not allowed to do by law.

## **What Are My Rights on the Job?**

### **By law, your employer must provide:**

- A safe and healthful workplace.
- Safety and health training, in many situations, including providing information on chemicals that could be harmful to your health.
- For many jobs, payment for medical care if you get hurt or sick because of your job. You may also be entitled to lost wages.
- At least the Federal minimum wage to most teens, after their first 90 days on the job. Many states have minimum wages which may be higher than the Federal wage, and lower wages may be allowed when workers receive tips from customers. Call your state Department of Labor listed in the blue pages of your phone book for information on minimum wages in your state.

### **You also have a right to:**

- Report safety problems to OSHA.
- Work without racial or sexual harassment.

- Refuse to work if the job is immediately dangerous to your life or health.
- Join or organize a union.

### **What Hazards Should I Watch Out For?**

<i>Type of Work</i>	<i>Example of Hazards</i>
Janitor/Clean up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Toxic chemicals in cleaning products</li> <li>• Blood on discarded needles</li> </ul>
Food Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Slippery floors</li> <li>• Hot cooking equipment</li> <li>• Sharp objects</li> </ul>
Retail/Sales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Violent crimes</li> <li>• Heavy lifting</li> </ul>
Office/Clerical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stress</li> <li>• Harassment</li> <li>• Poor computer work station design</li> </ul>

### **Is It OK to Do Any Kind of Work?**

**NO! There are laws that protect teens from doing dangerous work.**

**No worker under 18 may:**

- Drive a motor vehicle as a regular part of the job or operate a forklift at any time.
- Operate many types of powered equipment like a circular saw, box crusher, meat slicer, or bakery machine.
- Work in wrecking, demolition, excavation, or roofing.
- Work in mining, logging, or a sawmill.
- Work in meat-packing or slaughtering.
- Work where there is exposure to radiation.
- Work where explosives are manufactured or stored.

**Also, no one 14 or 15 years old may:**

- Bake or cook on the job (except at a serving counter).
- Operate power-driven machinery, except certain types which pose little hazard such as those used in offices.
- Work on a ladder or scaffold.
- Work in a warehouse.
- Work in construction, building, or manufacturing.
- Load or unload a truck, railroad car, or conveyor.

## Are There Other Things I Can't Do?

*Yes!*

There are many other restrictions regarding the type of work you can and cannot do. If you are under 14, there are even stricter laws to protect your health and safety. States have their own child labor laws which may be stricter than the federal laws. Check with your school counselor, job placement coordinator, or state Department of Labor to make sure the job you are doing is allowed.

## What Are My Safety Responsibilities on the Job?

**To work safely you should:**

- Follow all safety rules and instructions.
- Use safety equipment and protective clothing when needed.
- Look out for co-workers.
- Keep work areas clean and neat.
- Know what to do in an emergency.
- Report any health and safety hazard to your supervisor.

## Should I Be Working This Late or This Long?

Federal child labor laws protect younger teens from working too long, too late, or too early. Some states have laws on the hours that older teen may work.

This table shows the hours 14- and 15- year –olds may work. (There are exceptions for students in work experience programs)

**Work Hours for Teens  
Ages 14 and 15**

<b>Work Hours</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• not before 7 a.m. or after 7 p.m. between Labor Day and June 1</li><li>• Not during school hours</li><li>• 7 a.m. – 9 p.m. between June 1 and Labor Day</li></ul>
<b>Maximum Hours When School Is In Session</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 18 hours a week, but not over:</li><li>• 3 hours a day on school days</li><li>• 8 hours a day Saturday, Sunday, and holiday</li></ul>
<b>Maximum Hours When School Is Not in Session</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 40 hours a week</li><li>• 8 hours a day</li></ul>

## What If I Need Help?

- Talk to your boss about the problem.
- Talk to your parents or teachers.
- For a Hazard Alert on preventing injuries and deaths of adolescent workers or for information on specific workplace hazards, contact NIOSH at **1-800-35-NIOSH(1-800-356-4674)** and ask for Report #95-125 or visit the NIOSH homepage at <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/homepage.html>
- For more information on working safe, visit the Department of Labor web site at <http://www.dol.gov> or call your local Wage and Hour Office (under Department of Labor in the blue pages of your local telephone book).
- If necessary contact one of these government agencies (Phone numbers can be found under Department of Labor in the blue pages of your local telephone book).
- **OSHA** - to make a health or safety complaint.
- **Wage and Hour** – to make a complaint about wages, work hours, or illegal work by youth less than 18 years of age.
- **Equal Employment Opportunities Commission** – to make a complaint about sexual harassment or discrimination

### **You have a *Right* to speak up!**

It is illegal for your employer to fire or punish you for reporting a workplace problem.

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